The Report Committee for Ilse Rocio Garcia Romero
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following report:

Why Not Both: Latina Intersectionality and Bilingualism in *Jane the Virgin*

APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:

Supervisor:

Mary C. Beltrán

Charles E. Berg

Why Not Both: Latina Intersectionality and Bilingualism in *Jane the Virgin*

by

Ilse Rocio Garcia Romero, B.A.

Report

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Dedication

To Latina/os in the United States who struggle to define and understand their bicultural identities. To those of us who speak fluent Spanish and those who only understand a little bit but identify as Latina/o all the same, and to all Latina girls who get excited when they see themselves represented on screen.

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Abstract

Why Not Both: Latina Intersectionality and Bilingualism in *Jane the Virgin*

Ilse Rocio Garcia Romero, M.A.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2017

Supervisor: Mary C. Beltrán

The underrepresentation and misrepresentation of Latina/os on U.S. English-language television dates back several decades to the beginning of TV programming, and has been documented by media scholars. As television series become more culturally diverse, the images of Latina/o families are gradually becoming more multidimensional to reflect their bicultural, and often bilingual, lifestyle with a greater sense of authenticity. However, the degree to which Latina/o Americans choose to interact with Latina/o culture or with the Spanish language varies depending on their generation and how assimilated they are into American culture. This is very relevant to the success of the hit CW show *Jane the Virgin*. The series presents viewers with contrasting Latina perspectives in its depiction of the Villanueva women. While they are all part of the same bicultural, bilingual family, the women represent different views on topics like religion, immigration, gender norms, and sexuality, which influence the way that they act in

certain situations. Through a textual analysis of select episodes from seasons 1 and 2 of the show, this thesis report illustrates the highly intersectional nature of Latina gender and cultural identity in *Jane the Virgin* and for U.S. Latinas more generally. An exploration of this topic through discourse analysis also demonstrates how the show is unique in its treatment of a Latina/o multigenerational family that allows for both Latina/o and non-Latina/o viewers to identify with its characters.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Jane the Virgin, "Chapter 10" (Season 1 Episode 10)

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Flashback. In a dimly lit room JANE, about 9 years old, approaches her abuela with a worried look.

JANE

Abuela? Can you teach me how to pray? Like, the right way, with your rosary?

ALBA

Claro. Mira, rezar el rosario es una cosa muy especial.

[Subtitled on screen] *Of course. It's very special to pray with a rosary.*

They both sit down on the couch as Alba pulls out a rosary out of her robe pocket.

ALBA (CONT.)

¿Sabes? Acudes a él cuando necesitas tener esperanza.

You know? You turn to it when you really need hope.

JANE

(sighs) I just want Heritage Day to go well. Mom's cooking, and I don't want anyone to get seriously sick.

ALBA

Ah, bueno. Primero, tomas el crucifijo y haces la señal de la cruz.

Ah, well. First, take the Crucifix, and make the sign of the cross.

Alba does the motions that she mentions.

ALBA (CONT.)

Luego dices un acto de contrición—la oración del Yo Pecador.

Then you say the Apostles' Creed.

LATIN LOVER NARRATOR (V.O.)

And from that moment on, when Jane felt especially desperate, she would often turn to prayer.

DISSOLVE TO BLACK.

Jane the Virgin follows the life of 23-year-old Jane Villanueva, who, after being accidentally artificially inseminated by her gynecologist, finds herself questioning all aspects of her life. As per her abuela's teachings, Jane grew up to believe that sex should be saved until after marriage because a woman's virginity cannot be recovered once it has been lost. Jane's abuela wants her to be sure of the implications of her actions and of her love for her partner before she decides to enter a physical relationship. With this belief in mind, Jane chooses to remain abstinent despite being in a committed two-year relationship with her boyfriend Michael. A determined planner, Jane has set up a series of deadlines for her and Michael to meet before they get married, such as her receiving her teaching degree and him spending enough time in the investigative force to receive a raise and establish himself as a tenured detective. Jane is afraid that having an unplanned pregnancy would cause her dreams and goals to change entirely, as her mother's did when she had Jane at 17. Despite her precautions, Jane sees her plans take a twisted turn when she becomes accidentally pregnant by insemination, causing her to rethink her life

plan. *Jane the Virgin* highlights the way that all three Villanueva women deal with concepts of Latinidad and sexuality as they relate to Jane's situation.[1]

The scene quoted at the beginning of this essay, for example, encapsulates the complexity of a bicultural show like *Jane the Virgin.* The most noticeable writing technique employed in this scene is the usage of bilingual dialogue. When young Jane addresses her abuela, Alba responds without hesitation in Spanish, continuing the conversation seamlessly. We can infer that young Jane is fully fluent in Spanish based on the fact that she can keep a conversation going with her abuela without missing a beat; however, it is worth noting that in spite of her bilingualism she chooses to respond in English. Alba's words are subtitled for non-Spanish speaking audiences in a way that invites viewers to be part of the conversation, as well as to get a feel for Jane's bilingual family. This element in the script alone can appeal to the descendants of first generation immigrants as they balance the cultural implications of what it means to be a U.S.-born citizen of Latina/o heritage. Bilingual conversations among family members are bound to happen, depending on which language and nationality a person is most comfortable with. In a series of studies conducted by Luna, Ringberg, and Peracchio, the scholars assess how bicultural bilinguals switch between different sets of cognitive structures that address different parts of a person's cultural identity. "Bicultural bilinguals" refers to those individuals who have adopted two cultures and have associated different languages with each culture. According to Luna, Ringberg, and Peracchio, bicultural bilinguals "often report feeling 'like a different person' when they speak different languages," which is worth exploring when we consider the multiple identities of a Latina/o immigrant (2008, p. 279). The researchers point out that even two words

[1] "Latinidad" is defined by Vittoria Rodríguez and Mary Beltrán (2017) as "shared notions of Latina/o identities and experience within popular culture." This definition is based on Juan Flores' (1997) understanding of the Latina/o community, which he refers to as an imagined community and a united identity that is equally constructed through lived experiences and external views on what a Latina/o should be.

in different languages that may mean the same thing could easily possess different "sets of culture-specific conceptual associations," which is partly the reason of such evident frame switching in bicultural bilingual people (p. 279). The scene from *Jane the Virgin* that I include thus demonstrates how each main character in the series has the ability to navigate her bicultural bilingual identity through language.

Another element worth analyzing in that scene is religious faith as a way that Jane bonds with her abuela. When young Jane asks Alba to teach her how to pray "the right way," she expresses an interest in her cultural roots and in respecting and cherishing her family's beliefs. Alba promptly agrees to teach her, demonstrating her willingness to share some of her cultural traditions that may otherwise be lost among her descendants. Furthermore, religion plays a significant role in the show's narrative, which is emphasized in the narrator's commentary about Jane using her abuela's prayer teachings in times of need. While Jane is not necessarily pious herself, she respects her heritage and finds comfort in following her abuela's traditions when she feels like a situation is out of her control. A scene like the one I have chosen illustrates the differences between Jane and Alba in terms of cultural identity while also marking a meeting point at which the two different women can, not only coexist, but even bond. This element is worth analyzing in the way that it appeals to different generations of Latina viewers, who can relate and sympathize with each other, even while discussing topics that they do not agree on.

Based on a popular Venezuelan telenovela called *Juana la Virgen, Jane the Virgin* (2014) centers on Jane's Venezuelan-American family, comprised of her immigrant abuela and her youthful mom. The women make references to their Venezuelan background and traditions, and they speak both English and Spanish to each other. This study is dedicated to the exploration of Latina/o biculturalism in *Jane the Virgin* and the way that the show uniquely depicts Latina/o

culture through its treatment of topics like religion, immigration, female sexuality, and unwanted pregnancy. My principal questions throughout this project are: How does *Jane the Virgin*'s treatment of topics of gender and ethnic culture differ from those of past shows starring Latina/os? What message are the writers conveying through the portrayal of the Villanuevas about Latina/o culture and, specifically, about Latina women? The object of this study is to illustrate the way that gender and ethnic culture, frequently used in conjunction as personal identifiers, intersect. I will prove that the beliefs and traditions of U.S. Latina/os often are based on factors like age and degree of assimilation into American culture and thus that Latina/o biculturalism is very complex. In the same manner, bilingualism among bicultural Latina/os exists on a spectrum and varies from person to person even if they are part of the same generation or overarching ethnicity. Furthermore, Hollywood images, even if erroneous, are very powerful in the way that they establish beliefs about groups of people. A study of a recent Hollywood media text like *Jane the Virgin* is necessary in that it helps scholars to understand how Latina/o representation in media is shifting to include more complex depictions of Latina/os.

LATINA/O REPRESENTATION ON TELEVISION

A 2016 study by the Media, Diversity and Social Change Initiative at the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism found that only 5.8% of speaking characters surveyed in film and TV were Hispanic or Latino, proving that there is still much work to be done regarding diversity and inclusion on screen. Meanwhile, according to U.S. Census data from 2015, 17.6% of the population self-identified as Hispanic or Latina/o, making Latina/os the largest minority group in the country (African Americans account for 13.3% of the population). Yet in a 2016 report, Frances Negrón-Muntaner et al. conclude that "Latino

presence in mainstream media remains extremely low and changing at a very slow pace in relation to the demographic changes sweeping the country," calling this problem the "Latino media gap" (p. 37). The invisibility of Latina/os on television to this day continues to place the burden of representation on the few television shows that have managed to stay on the air for longer than a season or two. The main problem with this burden is that an entire race or ethnicity is virtually impossible to accurately represent in one character or one show, leading audiences to often want more representation that directly speaks to their lifestyle.

However, the recent movement for diversity on television allows for images of non-white American families to become normalized and more easily accepted by loyal audiences.[2] "I believe shows need to reflect what America looks like," remarked CW President Mark Pedowitz when asked about his decision to air the Latino-centric *Jane the Virgin* in 2014. As the U.S. Latino/a population continues to expand, television programming seems to be trying to catch up with demographic changes that expand beyond the majority white viewers. Though casting and storytelling choices may appear to be small choices to the network, they undoubtedly have a large impact on audiences of color.

Before we delve into more recent media starring Latina/os, it is important to recognize that Latina/os have a history of underrepresentation and misrepresentation on national programming since the beginning of commercial television. Many scholars have already explored the way that stereotypes on screen affect audiences, and how this typically works in favor of the defamation of Latina/os worldwide. I build on the work of previous scholars and

[2] This movement for diversity on television directly stems from the election of former president Barack Obama in 2008. Media outlets referred to the event as the beginning of a post-racial society, when in fact, our media became more inclusive and multiracial at that time.

give a brief history of Latina/o representation on screen in order to demonstrate the slow progress in ameliorating the image of Latina/os.

The work of Charles Ramirez Berg highlights the way that stereotypes persist in film, and can be used to understand stereotypical images on television. Ramirez Berg explains that there are two types of stereotypes: those that are created as mental constructs, and those that are found in mass media. "'The picture in our heads' kind of stereotype exists in the individual mind, whereas the mediated stereotype exists on the screen as a public commodity," he explains in his book "Latino Images in Film" (p. 38). A mediated stereotype is undoubtedly more threatening to the marginalized group it defines, seeing that mass media by definition is widely public. Because of their easy recognition, Hollywood images often reach viewers all over the world, and this is even more true in the current era of streaming when we consider Hollywood films and Netflix internationally. Ramirez Berg studies the way that cinematic devices are utilized to portray characters in a stereotypical way, from "mise-en-scène to framing, from camera angles to shot duration, from set decoration to music and sound effects" (p. 42). All of these devices work in conjunction to bring viewers a complete stereotypical message that they may or may not consciously perceive.

Both Ramirez Berg and Mary Beltrán have individually studied Latina/o images in Hollywood, as well as the effect of Latina/o stereotypes disseminated globally. Ramirez Berg identifies the main Latina/o stereotypes in "three sets of male-female pairs: *el bandido* and the harlot, the male buffoon and the female clown, the Latin lover and the dark lady" (Ramirez Berg, 2002, p. 39). Similarly, in her book "Latina/o Stars in U.S. Eyes," Beltrán, buiding on Ramirez Berg's work, has cited a variety of Latino/a stereotypes in film and television such as "the Latin lover, the bandido/cholo, and the harlot, or spitfire," which over time have helped to create a

specific—albeit erroneous—image of what Latino/as should look and act like (Beltrán, 2009, p. 2).

Historically, Latina/os have not been properly represented on television, seeing that producers have often relied on stereotypical tropes to present Latina/o pan-ethnicity to audiences.[3] An example of a controversial representation of Latino/as on television is Desi Arnaz in *I Love Lucy*, who in the 1950s presented new possibilities for Latino/as on screen in his popularity and his trademark embrace of Cuban American culture. However, Arnaz's Latino identity was made palatable for white American audiences by having him be part of a mixed marriage and having him frequently remind the audience that he loves the U.S., in addition to his fair skin making him seem more relatable.[4]

The 1970s brought Chicano/a and Puerto Rican activism, which translated into activism for the inclusion of Latino/as in the production of television shows. Out of this sociopolitical movement came the popular *Chico and the Man* and a few bilingual children's shows on public television that attempted to add diversity to network programming. The immense success of shows like *The Cosby Show* in the 1980s encouraged shows to cast more Latino/as as part of ensemble casts in order to establish diversity. Shows like *a.k.a Pablo* (1984) and *Sanchez of Bel Air* (1986) attempted to depict U.S. Latina/o families but failed to reflect Latina/o lives authentically, ending in the shows' cancellation. Despite not being the lead actors, Latino/a

[3] Pan-ethnicity encompasses the different characteristics that Latina/os may or may not possess or identify with, such as their race, ethnicity, religion, and even language, as explained in Alysa Perreras' "Pan Latino Identity Defined." Acknowledging that Latina/os are pan-ethnic serves to approach Latina/os with sensitivity for our diverse cultures while addressing the erasure of those cultures in calling us all "Latina/o." At the same time the term Latina/o can be used to imply a certain unity among people of Latin American heritage living in the U.S., as we often deal with similar issues of discrimination or identity crisis.

[4] As studied by Mary Beltrán in "Latina/os on TV!: A Proud (and Ongoing) Struggle Over Representation and Authorship (p.25)

actors like Edward James Olmos and Jimmy Smits found themselves earning the first Emmy awards for Latino/as for their work on *Miami Vice* and *L.A. Law* respectively.

The late 1990s and 2000s presented even more changes to English-language television created for the Latina/o community, and meant to appeal to other viewers. Latina/o actors began to be included into more television programming when networks realized that Latino/a viewers did not consume all of their media in Spanish. Namely, beginning in 2001, bilingual networks such as mun2 (NBC-Telemundo), Tr3s (MTV-Viacom) and NuvoTV (SíTV Media) were created in an attempt to reach bicultural Latino/a viewers. In addition, the early 2000s brought shows like *American Family, Ugly Betty,* and *The George Lopez Show*, with Latina/os as writers, producers and directors, allowing for a new, refreshing wave of representation of Latino/as that promised to be more authentic than ever before.

In 2014, *Jane the Virgin* and *Cristela* both attempted to change the way that Latina/o families were portrayed on television by starring Latina lead characters with aspirations of becoming successful in their respective professional fields, writing and law. These shows feature high achieving Latina/o professionals rather than the stereotypical lower class and uneducated Latina/o, which has made Beltrán concerned that we have begun to erase entire communities of "less assimilated" Latina/os. Her argument is that in showcasing only the stories of assimilated Latina/os, while refreshing and empowering, effectively erases the stories of Latina/os who speak less English or who have spent less time living in the United States. She calls for the diversity of image within the representation of Latino/as on television, challenging us as scholars to consider which kinds of images will be most empowering to Latina/o communities. In "Latina/os on TV!: A Proud (and Ongoing) Struggle Over Representation and Authorship,"

Beltrán addresses the age-old question of who we are actually representing on screen, and how we define an "authentic" portrayal.

BILINGUALISM AND BICULTURALISM ON TELEVISION

As I mentioned before, bilingualism belongs on a spectrum that starts with no fluency to complete fluency of the second language, where most bilingual people fall somewhere in between the two extremes. While a trait like bilingualism can be difficult to portray on television, several shows have included different degrees of bilingualism in their dialogue. There are instances in shows like *Orange is The New Black* and *Breaking Bad* that feature Latino/a characters speaking in fluent Spanish that is conveniently translated for the audience. The plots of these two shows benefit from scenarios in which realistic Latino/a characters showcase their culture through speaking Spanish and allow the viewer to be exposed to a foreign language. In some of the cases in which the Spanish dialogue is subtitled, a character or two may be left out of the loop due to their lack of bilingualism, which may be a technique used for comic relief. Occasionally, in shows like *Weeds*, two characters will have a full conversation in Spanish that will not be translated in order to simulate the position of the non-Spanish speaking protagonist. In this way, when the main character is lost and has to ask what the conversation is about, monolingual English speaking viewers do not necessarily possess more information than said character. English subtitles may also be omitted if the Spanish conversation shown is short or could be deciphered by viewers using contextual clues.

Yet another way that Spanish speakers are incorporated into the narrative of a television series or film is to have them speak fluent English with heavy Spanish accents. This last method insinuates that the characters are not well-adjusted to American culture and it is usually employed for comedic effect, however, as in the case of Gloria (Sofia Vergara)'s exaggerated

accent on *Modern Family*. Despite the fact that Gloria speaks fluent English, the other characters in the show tend to treat her as if she were less intelligent or clearly alien to the rest of the family.

In contrast with these portrayals, more recent programming showcases bilingual Latina/os. Viviana Rojas and Juan Piñón claim that the creation of Latino-centric American channels such as mun2 (2001), Tr3s (2006) and NuvoTV (2004) attempted to appeal to a neglected section of US audiences by appealing to bilingual and bicultural youth. "The bilingual networks are targeting the cultural and linguistic realities of many young Latinos who constantly move between two languages and operate in two cultural worlds," the scholars conclude, as they emphasize the importance of media that cultivates multiculturalism rather than assimilation (Rojas and Piñón, 2014, p. 10). Unfortunately, all three of those channels have been merged or eventually shut down, but their business model is worth studying and redefining. How do we create programming that targets young Latino/as and mimics their bicultural and bilingual lives? This treatment of the "bilingual billennial" is examined by Yvonne Villarreal for *The Los Angeles Times*, who asserts that young people who identify as Latino/a but are not first generation immigrants tend to have myriad viewing options within television programming.[5]

Villarreal cites a 2012 Pew Research study that shows that 34% of U.S. Latino families predominantly speak English at home, yet according to a 2011 Nielsen report, half of the families that are fluent in both English and Spanish choose to consume Spanish-language television. The report also states that in the 2009-2010 TV season, homes where Spanish is the dominant language viewed 78% of their programming in Spanish, and English-language-dominant homes spent only 3% of their time viewing programming in Spanish. This discrepancy

[5] "Billennials" refers to bilingual millennials, and is used by Univision to refer to second and third generation Latina/o immgrants, Villareal explains.

may have to do with the genre of the content that is available in each language and with the age group and cultural identity of the viewer. While young Latino/as are may often watch popular English-language sitcoms or reality shows, older generations of Latino/as in the same households may be watching telenovelas or Spanish-language news. According to Villarreal, the fact that Latina/o youth currently make up 21% of the total millennial population in the U.S. has contributed to the gradual change in bilingual and bicultural programming in recent years.

There has been a fair amount of scholarship done on Spanish-language television for U.S. Latino/as, including the work of Arlene Dávila, Yeidy Rivero, and Diana Rios, and specifically scholarship that focuses on Latino/a-oriented children's television programming, but there have been only a few scholars who have researched the types of programming that Latino/a youth consume and the effect of bilingual television on bridging the cultural gap. Most notably, Guillermo Avila-Saavedra has analyzed the way that Latino/a youth consumption habits are changing the types of bicultural programming available to them. In his dissertation he argues that "the analysis of the Latino trend reveals through performance and representation, young U.S. Latinos' constant negotiation between their ethnic identities and their mainstream identities" (2008, p. 177). In this way, television shows that are aimed at young Latina/o audiences acknowledge that Latina/os are diverse, and offer young bilingual U.S. Latina/os new possibilities of identification (Avila-Saavedra, 2008). The changing nature of television in the post-network era (2005-present) as studied by television scholar Amanda Lotz, is worth considering as we examine the way that television programming has become more audience-focused through narrowcasting in a time of multiculturalism and cultural sensitivity.[6]

[6] Here I use the term "multiculturalism" as defined by media and critical theory scholar Douglas Kellner, who in his 2011 essay "Cultural studies, Multiculturalism, and Media Culture," explained: "An insurgent multiculturalism attempts to show how various people's voices and experiences are silenced and omitted from mainstream culture,

Television marketers have created a series of classifications for U.S. Latina/o billennials based on their level of acculturation, using names such as Americanizado, Nueva Latina, Bi-cultural, Hispano and Latinoamericana. Americanizado represents an English-dominant third generation Latina/o with few Hispanic cultural practices, and Nueva Latina refers to a second-generation Latina/o who has retained some Hispanic cultural practices and still speaks some Spanish (Jacobson, 2011). While language may serve as a signifier of cultural identity, there are other factors that define Latina/os. Rojas and Piñón claim that "values, religion, history, traditions, music and food, among other factors, are part of Latinos' cultural hybridity" (p. 4). These factors are especially relevant in bicultural television shows that attempt to join the values of two distinct cultures in a respectful way. *The George Lopez Show*, for example, encompassed the bicultural values and habits of a Mexican American family through bilingual dialogue and a comical combination of traditionally Mexican and American customs and mannerisms.

JANE THE VIRGIN AS A PROGRESSIVE CULTURAL OBJECT

Jane the Virgin was created in an environment of relative cultural diversity on television, following the success of *Ugly Betty* as a Latino telenovela adapted for American audiences.[7] In a seemingly unusual programming scheme, *Jane the Virgin* was set to air on the CW on Mondays at 9pm, following the vampire horror fantasy series *The Originals.* The telenovela-inspired dramedy did well during its first season, garnering 1.2 million viewers during the 2014-2015 season. *Jane the Virgin* managed to garner the attention of critics and audiences alike with its fresh look at Latina/o characters. The series was awarded the American Film Institute Television

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and struggles to aid in the articulation of diverse views, experiences, and cultural forms from groups excluded from the mainstream."

[7] *Jane the Virgin* premiered on the CW in the Fall of 2014, along with the culturally conscious *Blackish, Fresh Off the Boat*, and *Cristela* on ABC. This time period is considered by television scholars as a time when network executives specifically aimed for diversity in their programming.

Program of the Year award in 2014, as well as receiving a wide array of awards and accolades in 2015, including the People's Choice Award for Favorite New TV Comedy, a Peabody Award, the EWwy Award for Best Comedy Series, and the Public Guild of America Award.

Additionally, the show's largely Latina/o cast has been lauded for their performances on the show, which is also a significant accomplishment in a predominantly white Hollywood. Despite having acted in television shows and feature films before *Jane the Virgin*, lead actress Gina Rodriguez experienced a breakthrough in her career when she performed in the series as Jane. In 2015 Rodriguez was nominated for a variety of awards, such as the Critics' Choice Award for Best Actress in A Comedy Series and a Golden Globe Award for Best Actress in a Television Series, Musical or Comedy. When the show was picked up for a second season, critics attributed the success of the show to Rodriguez's performance. Other characteristics that makes the series unique are its focus on family, its modern adaptation of the telenovela genre, and the show's satirical self-awareness. Over the last two years, *Jane the Virgin* has developed a sizeable, loyal fan base, whose commitment to the show has resulted in high ratings and the premiere of its third season in October 2016. Critics and fans alike praise the series for its portrayal of the Latino community in a way that is progressive to U.S. Latino families, while still providing engaging entertainment for all age groups and ethnic backgrounds. The Latino-centric show represents a glimmer of hope for people of color that do not have a history of being represented properly on the CW, not to mention on broadcast television.

Thematically, *Jane the Virgin* is also unconventional. In spite of being a television show about a family of Latinas and the way the women deal with adversity, the show is not strictly about being Latina in the same way that other ethnocentric television shows focus on non-whiteness. Rather than using Jane's ethnicity or her virginity as the main driving force of the

plot, Urman writes a universal narrative from a feminine point of view that arguably comes off as authentic and relatable, even to viewers of different ethnicities.

In the last decade, the telenovela has emerged in the English-speaking world as a new genre to discover while it has had incredible success in Latin American countries dating back to the introduction of television. In 2006, Silvio Horta developed an adaptation of *Yo Soy Betty La Fea* for American audiences. The original telenovela from Colombia first aired in 1999, and according to WorldScreen.com, it was such a commercial success that it has been redone and adapted for more than 130 territories worldwide. *Ugly Betty*, as the English version was named, lasted four seasons and was a pioneer of Latino-based drama in American television.

Nearly ten years later, the idea for *Jane the Virgin* was brought to the CW by Ben Silverman, chairman of the multimedia studio Electus, as he attempted to recreate the 2002 Venezuelan hit telenovela *Juana la Virgen* for English-speaking audiences following a creative model similar to *Ugly Betty*'s. Silverman had previously worked on *Ugly Betty*, and in an interview with the *New York Times* had said that at the time "it was difficult to get the next wave of Hispanic-centered shows onto the air," despite the series' success. According to a 2015 report from the United States Census Bureau, the demographic percentage of Hispanics in the U.S. had reached 17.4% of the total population, or over 55 million people, by 2014, and is projected to continue to surge to an impressive 28.6%, or 119 million people, by 2060 (Colby and Ortman, p. 9). These circumstances, combined with the fragmentation of programming into niche shows on both traditional and digital networks, has provided the ideal environment for a show featuring a Latina lead to succeed.

While maintaining the telenovela's Latina/o roots, *Jane the Virgin* writers are also challenging production conventions solely by being a diverse, and partially Latina/o, group of

people writing about a Latina/o family. Although Urman herself is not of Latina/o heritage, she and her writers' room of five women and three men have managed to present both the female gender and the Latina/o ethnicity in an empowering manner on *Jane the Virgin*. In a 2014 interview with the National Hispanic Media Coalition, Emmylou Diaz, an assistant writer in the *Jane the Virgin* writers' room, explains:

> As a group, we Latinos bring a level of cultural diversity to the table that is so incredibly rich. Just as an example, in our writers' room we have writers of Honduran, Mexican and Colombian descent. While there are some cultural similarities between us, these are three very different backgrounds from which to draw story! As I mentioned earlier, everyone brings their own life experience into the writers' room in service to the story, so I think it's in everyone's best interest to make that room as diverse as possible. Latinos continue to be the largest and fastest-growing minority group in the US, so it's imperative to have that reflected in the writers' room. (Paragraph 9)

CASE STUDIES AND CHAPTER OVERVIEW

In studying the first and second seasons of *Jane the Virgin*, I have decided to focus on the way the show addresses important issues related to Latina/o culture, such as religious beliefs, immigration, and deportation, and related to gender such as unwanted pregnancy, virginity and sexuality among young women, and traditional gender roles. As stated earlier, my primary research questions are: How does *Jane the Virgin*'s treatment of topics of gender and ethnic culture differ from those of past shows starring Latina/os? What message are the writers

conveying through the portrayal of the Villanuevas about Latina/o culture and, specifically, about Latina women? Although these topics are not necessarily specific to the Latino/a population, the way they are portrayed on the show characterizes Latino/a culture in the way that is neither offensive nor stereotypical. In order to explore these questions, I use a qualitative research method consisting of textual and discourse analysis. First I closely examine a select few episodes of the first and second seasons of the show that clearly represent the way that the characters, and the show itself, approach specific issues. I have chosen this selection of episodes based on what I assessed to be their cultural impact, as they arguably promote diversity and gender equality. I chose the episodes and scenes I will be analyzing by recalling some of the most subjectively moving, progressive, or culturally representative moments of seasons 1 and 2 of *Jane the Virgin.* I define moving moments as those that caused an emotional reaction in me as a Latina scholar and a first-generation immigrant; scenes that I found impactful due to the way that they presented difficult topics through different perspectives. This emotional reaction is partly caused by my ability to relate and empathize with the Villanueva women, and partly by the fact that I have never before seen Latina women represented on screen in such an authentic, multidimensional way. My textual analysis will consider issues that arise on the show as they relate to a progressive and authentic view of gender and Latinidad, as well as to intersectionality. In my consideration of these topics, I will be investigating how the show's narrative represents the complexities of bicultural bilinguals within multigenerational immigrant families.

In this report, I will dedicate one chapter to the analysis of Latina/o biculturalism and bilingualism and another to the close analysis of gender and sexuality in the series, although gender and culture naturally intersect in both. Each chapter will assess scenes in six different episodes, as I study the types of commentary that the narrative presents concerning Latina

women. I specifically pay close attention to the way the women address and interact with each other, as well as how they make decisions and the motivation for their actions during trying or desperate times. I examine not only the dialogue and narrative of *Jane the Virgin,* but also aesthetic devices when they are relevant to my study. Devices such as framing, mise-en-scène, music, and costuming work together to convey a message of cultural and personal identity that transcends generational gaps and citizenship status.

Chapter 2 will concentrate on Latina/o biculturalism and bilingualism, as it examines the way that episodes 1, 3, 8, 10, 18, and 24 address cultural background issues such as those that involve religion and citizenship status for Latina/o immigrants. I explore the following question: How does *Jane the Virgin* present contended cultural topics to a mixed audience in order to illustrate the experience of different generations of U.S. Latinas? I will assess how those episodes portray the Latina/o family and reconcile the differences among the three Villanueva women. In this chapter I will also discuss the bilingualism in the dialogue and what that means in terms of the dual identity of Latino/a immigrants in the U.S.

Chapter 3 will interrogate the way that the narrative in episodes 1, 2, 3, 9, 28, and 36 encourages or challenges traditional Latina gender roles as they relate to sexuality, relationships and unwanted pregnancy in the narrative. I will answer questions such as: in what ways does *Jane the Virgin* affirm or challenge traditional gender roles? How do the show's depictions of sexuality and unwanted pregnancy complicate traditional views of women and their role in society?

Because the show combines intersectional gender and cultural issues into its narrative, it is possible that my discussion in these chapters will overlap, but I have nonetheless attempted to divide each chapter into topics that I will illustrate in my analysis of select *Jane the Virgin*

episodes. My discourse analysis of the episodes in terms of stylistic and thematic choices, along with my study of industry trade journal articles and existing literature on Latino/a representation will help uncover the importance of a show like *Jane the Virgin* addressing controversial issues on national television.

In the following chapters I examine the duality of identity of the U.S. Latino/a in depth in an attempt to more fully understand the role of languages and media representation in the lives of U.S. Latino/as. I consider *Jane the Virgin* to be the ideal case study for my research because it illustrates a variety of themes and elements that make it popular and successful among diverse audiences, and I take it upon myself to further explore its cultural and sociopolitical significance on modern viewers.

Chapter 2: Bicultural and Bilingual—Latinidad on *Jane the Virgin*

Latina/o stereotypes are as evident on screen as they were in the early days of Hollywood television and film, although as Beltrán notes in her work, some progress is being made in order to combat the issues of Latina/o underrepresentation and misrepresentation in media. Even still, the progress made is not enough to call it victory for Latina/os, especially considering that these images serve to establish the concept of Latinidad for Latina/os and non-Latina/os alike (Beltrán, 2). Because the representations of Latina/os on screen serve to inform our opinions of what Latina/os should act like, look like, and sound like, it is extremely important that those representations be as true to the culture as possible. This of course, proves to be a challenge for producers and networks because the Latina/o label is both complex and not clearly defined. The Latina/o pan-ethnicity encompasses so many different nationalities, races, religious beliefs, languages and dialects, such that it would be difficult to try to represent a concept as complex as Latinidad in a single character or even a single show.

At the time of publication there is a limited amount of published scholarship concerning bilingual and bicultural television shows, but I am able to use Juan Piñón's work on bicultural and bilingual youth to guide my research. Depicting a bicultural family can be even more challenging than that because different people feel varying degrees of comfort acknowledging their native culture, or speaking their family's native language after they have assimilated into American culture. Even within the same bicultural family, different members that belong to different generations and may or may not have been born in the United States may have differing preferences regarding how to act or which language to speak. Nevertheless, a television show like *Jane the Virgin* tackles the task of depicting a multigenerational, bicultural and bilingual family by showcasing situations that are familiar to Latina/o viewers without alienating non-

Latina/o viewers. Even more importantly, *Jane the Virgin* presents cultural that illustrate the experience of different generations of U.S. Latinas.

This chapter will assess how *Jane the Virgin* presents Latinidad and Latina/o issues in a way that is both respectful of Latina/o culture and accessible to members of different generations and Latina/o national origin groups. To address this question, I will be analyzing specific episodes in seasons 1 and 2 that speak to the characters' views on the topics of religion, immigration, and bilingualism, specifically as they relate to the three Villanueva women; Alba, Xiomara, and Jane. In doing so I am able to explore how Latinidad is defined on the show through the different experiences of each woman, as well as their shared experiences. I argue that the characters represent different (and often contradictory) perspectives about these aspects of Latinidad and culture, depending on each of the women's (1) age group, (2) level of connection to their Venezuelan roots, and (3) opportunities to improve her lifestyle.[8] The purpose of showing the women's different beliefs and habits, then, is to provide viewers with diverse Latina perspectives and to allow them to both identify with the Villanueva women and comprehend the motives of those with whom they do not identify. As I analyze the plot lines and the arcs in *Jane the Virgin* as they relate to the Latinidad of the Villanueva women, I will also evaluate the kinds of messages that these representations are conveying about Latina/os.

[8] This finding is inspired by Leisy Abrego's *Sacrificing Families: Navigation Laws, Labor, and Love Across Borders* (2014), regarding the factors that make some Latina/o immigrants more successful at integrating to U.S. culture than others. She explains: "How much they know, whom they know, and how long they've lived here all help determine how quickly and how favorably immigrants move up economically in the United States. With higher levels of education, for example, immigrants should qualify for better-paying jobs; the more friends and relatives they know in the United States, the more people they can rely on to help them find housing and work; and the longer they live here, the more they have learned about how to navigate opportunities and challenges in this country" (Abrego, p. 5).

RELIGION

I begin my textual analysis by assessing the way that *Jane the Virgin* portrays religion and its relationship to Latina/o culture. For example, in "Chapter 18," Jane doubts the Catholic church and the beliefs and practices that are associated with Easter. The episode begins by pointing out the different aspects of celebrating the holiday that each woman cherished. For young Jane, it was the chocolate eggs, for Xiomara it was the spring colors she would have the opportunity to wear, and for Alba it was attending mass. Though the three women had different interests, the narrator states that Easter is unanimously the Villanuevas' favorite time of the year. However, one year when Jane was still a girl, she developed a sense of analytical curiosity and began to doubt Jesus' resurrection. She timidly shares her concerns with her abuela, who calmly explains that to believe that Jesus was reborn is simply to have faith in religion and banish all doubt. Alba acknowledges Jane's blasphemous thoughts, but still she chooses to believe in God as she was raised to do in Venezuela, and she tries to instill the same beliefs in Jane.

There are a few different discrepancies at play during this interaction between Alba and Jane: their ages, their relationship to Venezuelan tradition (and by consequence to Catholic beliefs), and their life experiences. At the time of this flashback, Jane is at an age when people generally develop their curiosity and love of learning; because of this, Jane may be more likely to question religion and attempt to form her own opinions than an older woman who has lived by the teachings of the Bible all her life. Furthermore, Jane's biculturalism as an American child of Venezuelan descent may be causing her to question her family's cultural beliefs and favor a more secular outlook. This would not be a problem for Alba, who is much more in touch with her Venezuelan roots and is committed to honoring old traditions and customs in a stubborn refusal to assimilate. It is also important to note that Alba may be such a devout Catholic as

result of the trials that she may have faced throughout her life, specifically in relation to migrating to the United States. This experience is not one that Jane could relate to in her young age, nor had she experienced any other kind of hardship that caused her to rely on religion for courage.

In "Chapter 10," when Jane is around the same age, she turns to prayer to solve a personal issue that she believes only God could help with. As depicted in the introduction of this report, Jane is afraid that if her mother cooks for Heritage Day at school, all of her classmates will get sick because she is not a particularly good cook. Young Jane knows that to share this concern with her mother would hurt her feelings, so she asks for her abuela's help in learning how to pray properly. Delighted, Alba pulls out her rosary and explains in detail which prayers to say and when. Jane and her abuela bond over an important part of their Venezuelan culture, which is partly based on Catholic beliefs. Meanwhile, Xiomara overhears the two praying and makes a point of learning how to cook arepas the way that Alba would have made them, so that she can impress her daughter on Heritage Day.

In a way, it could be said that Jane's hopeful prayer worked, because Xiomara's arepas were a popular dish at school, and Jane had nothing to worry about. However, more important is that in an uncomfortable situation, the three Villanueva women had an opportunity to connect with each other and with their Latina/o roots in both praying in Spanish and cooking traditional Venezuelan food. Religion plays a large role in "Chapter 10," but the emphasis is also placed on the types of relationships that the women have with each other. Despite their differences in piousness, the Villanueva women work together to achieve a common goal, all while honoring their culture in a respectful way.

Although Xiomara is likely the least religious of the Villanueva women, just like Jane she chooses to pray at a time of desperation. When Alba is hospitalized in "Chapter 10," both Xiomara and Jane struggle to figure out how to react while missing an important part of their family. The two separately conclude that they should do what Alba would have done: pray. Jane goes looking for her abuela's rosary amidst a storm, while Xiomara stays in the hospital watching Alba for any sign of recovery. As time goes on without change in Alba's condition, Xiomara grows weary, and begins to reflect on her own life. "I wasn't the daughter she wanted, you know? I wasn't good or religious," she tells Rogelio through tears. Rogelio assures her that despite not having lived up to Alba's religious or moral standards, Xiomara can count on the love of her mother anyway. Faced with the fear of losing her mother, Xiomara turns to prayer just like her mother would have in her place. She recalls the arepa incident when her mother took the time to teach her how to cook Venezuelan food like her own mother had taught her, just in time for Heritage Day. Moved by her mother's love and generosity, she kneels over the hospital bed and holds her hands together in prayer.

Xiomara: (looking up) Help her, please. And in exchange I'll live a better life. More godlike and all that.

Latin Lover Narrator: [voiceover] And maybe it was a coincidence, Alba waking up as Xo prayed. Or maybe it really was a miracle.

Xiomara: I'll live a chaste life.

Latin Lover Narrator: [voiceover] But the facts remain—Alba did wake up.

Xiomara: And I won't let a man between these legs again without a ring.

Just as Xiomara made a very important promise to God in exchange for saving her mother's life, the previously unconscious Alba opens her eyes and listens to Xiomara's words. As the narrator points out, it is unclear here whether she happened to wake up coincidentally during Xiomara's prayer or if her waking up can be considered a miracle. This scene seems to cater to Latina viewers and those viewers whose religious beliefs match Alba's, seeing that according to a 2012 Pew Research Centers report, more than three-in five Latina/os identify as Catholic. On the other hand, the show's ambiguity during that scene alludes to a kind of magical realism that is common in many Latina/o films like *El Norte* and *Como Agua Para Chocolate*. The fact that this scene can be read in more than one way accommodates its diverse audience and allows viewers to decide which truth they want to believe. Furthermore, this is a particularly significant moment because Xiomara does not regularly pray, and the fact that she chooses to do so in a moment of need demonstrates her deep emotional connection to her mother and her culture.

There are plenty of scenes throughout the series that prove that Alba is a particularly pious individual; however, it is in "Chapter 8" when, just like Jane and Xiomara, she turns to prayer for protection. The scenes in the episode where Alba is seen praying with her rosary and praying at an altar at home are very brief, seeing that the focus of those scenes is the fact that Jane has a court hearing with Luisa's lawyer to finally settle the lawsuit. In an early scene while Jane and Xiomara are getting ready to go, Alba can be seen using her rosary, explaining that she cannot attend the hearing because it makes her nervous. Jane pays no attention to her abuela until much later in the episode, when the Villanuevas are getting ready to attend a special event that will premiere one of Xiomara's song at the Marbella. She again calls for her abuela, whom she finds praying at her altar again. Concerned, Jane asks Xiomara if her abuela is fine, seeing that she had been praying all day. Xiomara kindly reminds Jane that Alba is afraid of courts, and that

Jane's lawsuit is causing Alba's anxiety. In this example, Alba deals with her anxiety through prayer—quietly and privately. Rather than alarming Jane, she chooses to deal with the unpleasant situation on her own, with full faith that God will bring her eventual relief.

As demonstrated by these scenes, the Villanueva women have different degrees of faith in religion, yet they all turn to prayer when times are tough. Inevitably, their connection to religion is associated with the cultural values that the three women were raised with as Latinas. The fact that the women have differing views but still choose to cherish their biculturalism through religious beliefs helps to draw in bicultural viewers that may identify with one or more of the characters in the show. The fact that the show is neither too religious nor too secular allows viewers with different interests and values to be able to relate, without alienating others.

LATINA/O IMMIGRATION

In the same way that religion is portrayed on the show, immigration is a topic that is openly discussed by the characters, even while its real-life cultural significance may be controversial for certain viewers. Over the last 50 years, the foreign-born Latina/o population has increased by more than 20 times, from less than 1 million in 1960 to 19.3 million in 2014, while the U.S. born Latina/o population has only increased 6 times over the same time period, meaning that Latina/o immigration has been more relevant than ever before.[9] It is worth noting, however, that although Latina/o immigration is still a pertinent topic, Mexican immigration to the United States has actually decreased over time.[10] The show's writers knew very well that including undocumented immigration as a topic in the *Jane the Virgin* narrative might alienate a fraction of its loyal viewers

[9] As reported by a 2016 Pew Research Center study.
[10] According to a study by the Pew Research Center in 2017, immigration from Mexico has declined, but increased from elsewhere since 2009.

or might cause public backlash. However, they decided to humanize both the characters and the unfortunate situation by placing a beloved character like Alba in an unfavorable position based on her legal status in the United States. Alba's undocumented migratory trip is an experience that shapes the way that the Villanueva women deal with authority figures and restricts them from feeling safe throughout the series.

Most notably, in "Chapter 8" we learn the full story of how Alba and her husband traveled to the United States without the proper documentation. She explains to young Jane in a flashback that her husband's family was wealthy due to their involvement with Venezuelan oil. Alba later admits to being undocumented in a way that young Jane would understand: she says that her husband had fought with his family and moved to North America with her, except that they "weren't allowed" in the country. She fails to explain to Jane the precise reason why she isn't "allowed," citing the complexity of the issue; however, Xiomara mutters under her breath, "Stupid immigration laws," hinting at the real issue. The entire flashback arises from Jane recalling that parking tickets make her abuela nervous, and how Alba currently feels the same way about Jane being involved in a lawsuit. As a result of Alba panicking and nervously praying at her altar throughout the episode, Jane decides to withdraw the lawsuit against Luisa so that her abuela no longer has to worry about being found out.

The scene described is significant in the series because, without much dialogue, the Villanueva women discuss a very important family matter. They sit around the dinner table and simplify the issue of undocumented immigration for the understanding of both young Jane and the audience. When explained in such a clear manner, it becomes easier to sympathize with Alba, and with her and her husband's intentions when they migrated to the United States. It is evident by the way Alba shyly tells the story and the way she merely says that she and her husband were not

"allowed," that she is ashamed of her situation and has trouble talking about it. Given Jane's age at that time, she could have perhaps done more to explain to her how immigration laws work; instead, Alba simply states her family's good intentions and loosely explains why she was not wanted in the country. This sort of narration leaves Jane to see the injustice and to sympathize with her abuela, a reaction that is expected to be evoked in the audience as well.

Another time *Jane the Virgin* calls for a sympathetic reaction towards unjust situations is when Alba is threatened with medical repatriation in "Chapter 10." In this episode, Alba is hospitalized after receiving an injury on the head caused by Magda. She remains in a coma for the majority of the episode as Jane and Xiomara desperately pray for Alba to wake up. During the night, a doctor comes in to inform Xiomara and Rogelio that, although Alba's condition remains unchanged, the hospital is now aware that Alba does not have documents to reside in the country and therefore the doctors can no longer treat her for her injury.

Doctor: Your mother is in this country illegally. She has no insurance. And the hospital cannot afford to absorb the cost of her care.

Xiomara: I don't understand. What does that mean?

Doctor: That when the hurricane lifts, we will have to notify ICE, and they will deport her to Venezuela, where she can continue to receive care if she needs.

Xiomara: What? That can't be legal.

(View Figure 1).

Doctor: It's called medical repatriation.

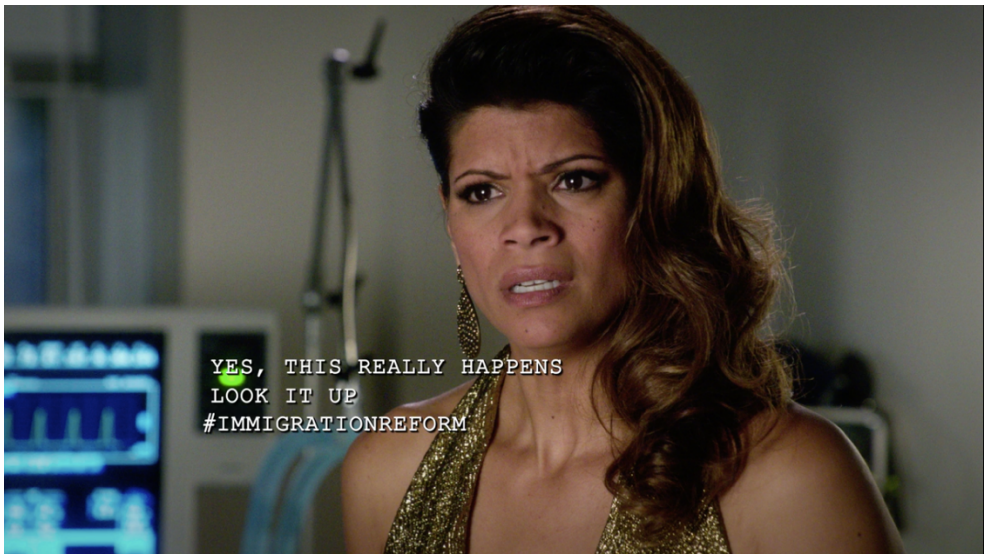

Figure 1. Xiomara looks bewildered as she speaks to the doctor. On-screen text insinuates that the situation depicted on the show is a real issue that undocumented immigrants must deal with.

Jane and Xiomara discuss the issue over a police radio while Rogelio tries to help; ultimately, Michael is able to remove Alba from that situation by telling the hospital that she is a key witness to an important investigation and cannot be sent home yet.

The medical repatriation narrative in *Jane the Virgin* is especially powerful in that it addresses the audience directly. The viewers witness Alba being not only seriously injured after maliciously being pushed down the stairs, but also threatened with deportation while she is still unconscious. The situation is very delicate and is solved in an unlikely manner, but it is evident from the accompanying on-screen text ("Yes, this really happens. Look it up. #ImmigrationReform) that the show is encouraging viewers to become informed about current U.S. immigration laws. Seeing that this is a very realistic legal case, hundreds of fans began using the hashtag #ImmigrationReform on Twitter as it related to the show following the airing of the episode.[11] Viewers responded positively to the scene, citing the show's cultural and

[11] "Chapter 10" aired on January 19, 2015, when we celebrated Martin Luther King Jr. Day and the right to social justice.

political awareness as an admirable quality. As illustrated in Figures 2 and 3, fans took to Twitter to express their sympathy for Alba, praise the show for addressing an important issue, and even help inform their followers on the national issue.

Figure 2. A Twitter user empathizes with Alba.

Figure 3. The #ImmigrationReform was widely used by Jane the Virgin fans even weeks after the episode originally aired.

While Alba's legal status comes up in different episodes throughout the show, it isn't until the beginning of the second season that we see Alba be deeply affected by her situation. In "Chapter 24," Jane steals a neighbor's amp as revenge for keeping Mateo awake. During the day, police come to question the Villanuevas as suspects, prompting them to question Alba in Jane's

absence. Alba panics at the sight of the uniformed men, afraid that she will have to admit to them that she is undocumented and they will take her away. Fortunately, Jane comes home in that moment and relieves Alba of speaking to the officers. Alba pretends to go look for her documents while Jane apologizes to the officers for having stolen the amp. They let her go with a warning to sort out her abuela's documents so that she can find them more easily in the future, and Jane finds Alba in her bedroom crying inconsolably. This serves as a catalyst, however, as later on in the episode Alba proudly announces to Jane and Xiomara that she is determined to file for naturalization in order to avoid future altercations. Alba explains that her legal status weighed heavily on Xiomara's (and later Jane's) childhood, and she does not want it to affect Mateo.

This surprising, yet happy, conclusion to a scary episode adds more dimension to a secondary character like Alba. She is clearly weighed down by her own legal status and is terrified to be taken away from her family. On the other hand, it is a relief to see Alba so committed to becoming a legal U.S. citizen and to learning English so that she can live more safely and comfortably. Like the other scenes that address her legal situation, the one in which she is almost deported for not being able to produce the proper documentation in front of police officers is a very delicate and scary one. This scenario helps to illustrate to viewers the kinds of situations that undocumented immigrants may find themselves in.

The plot line that follows Alba's migration story and her possible deportation helps to develop her as a character in a complicated situation. Her fear of authorities and courts becomes justified as we gradually learn her story and the kinds of scary situations she has been put in. Her story is particularly important because, while the show is primarily about Jane, Alba's legal status and fears directly affect the rest of the family. The situations that I previously described serve to show that undocumented migration is often a family affair, in which U.S. born family

members must learn to deal with their loved one's residency status. Jane and Xiomara can only try to cover for Alba and attempt to comfort her when she becomes excessively nervous about being near authority figures and the truth being found out. These three separate episodes that illustrate Alba's story as an immigrant are significant because they demonstrate that, contrary to popular belief, undocumented immigrants are often well-meaning people who were forced to leave their countries. In the case of Alba, all she wants is to be with her family and see her grandchild grow, in spite of beliefs that undocumented immigrants flee to the United States because they are escaped criminals or because they want to commit crimes in their host country. *Jane the Virgin* does a terrific job of negating those misconceptions and stereotypes by humanizing the undocumented immigrant as a loving family member that constantly fears for her life. This kind of message is important for viewers who are, or may know, undocumented immigrants because it sympathizes with their situation, but perhaps it is even more important for viewers who may have otherwise not had any idea what the life of an undocumented immigrant might be like.

BILINGUALISM

The usage of both English and Spanish in the dialogue of *Jane the Virgin* authenticates the bicultural lifestyle of the Villanueva family. According to a 2013 survey administered by the Pew Research Center, 36% of U.S. Latina/os are bilingual, 25% mostly use English, and 38% mostly use Spanish. For Foreign born Latina/os (like Alba), 60% choose to mainly speak Spanish, 5% speak mostly English, and 35% speak both languages equally. Meanwhile, for second-generation Latina/os like Jane, only 1% speak mostly Spanish, 42% speak mostly English, and 50% consider themselves to be fully bilingual (Krogstad and Gonzalez-Barrera, 2015). While being bilingual is not necessary to be bicultural, or vice versa, the writers of *Jane the Virgin* decided to make the

show bilingual in order to represent different levels of biculturalism and acculturation. For example, in the Villanueva's Venezuelan-American family, Alba only speaks Spanish but can understand English, Xiomara can speak English and accented Spanish, and Jane speaks English and fully understands Spanish. The rest of the characters on the show display an equally diverse spectrum of bilingualism, which is uncommon in popular television shows. This characteristic of the show is especially important because it helps to reflect the lives of viewers of different backgrounds and different age groups, as it is no coincidence that (much like the Villanueva's attachment to religion), time spent in the United States often is reflected in the person's knowledge of her family's native language or English.

Throughout the first season of *Jane the Virgin,* Alba can be seen interacting with Xiomara and Jane in Spanish. Her native language of Spanish becomes the language of reason and important life lessons, seeing that whenever Jane has a flashback to her childhood, Alba can be seen advising her in Spanish. For example, in "Chapter 1," in the opening of the pilot, when Alba instructs Jane to guard her virginity and to be careful, and in "Chapter 3," when she instructs Jane to always tell the truth.

Jane: I can't believe he dumped me.

Xiomara: Maybe next time, just don't tell him about the whole "virgin until marriage" thing.

Alba: Xiomara!

Xiomara: Relax! I don't mean "have sex." I just mean put off the conversation. Let him think you like to take it slow.

Alba: Una mentira por omisión es lo mismo, una mentira, y las pequeñas mentiras se convierten en grandes bolas de maldad. / [Subtitled on screen] *A lie by omission is a lie just the same, and little lies spiral into big balls of evil.*

Xiomara: (rolling her eyes) Really, Ma? "Big balls of evil"?

Alba: Hiciste lo correcto. El hombre correcto te va a esperar. / *You did exactly right. The right man will wait.*

In this scene from "Chapter 3," Jane is heartbroken because her boyfriend broke up with her when she states her intentions of saving herself until marriage. Rather than honoring her wishes and thanking her for being honest with him, the boy leaves her, hurt and confused. Xiomara advises her to ease into the conversation, while Alba insists that Jane must be honest right from the beginning of the relationship. Alba's wish is that such a disclaimer will end up weeding out the men that are not worthy of Jane. Even still, it is worth noting in this scene that the difference between Alba and Xiomara isn't just in their individual beliefs and morals, or even in their perspectives based on their age and attachment to traditional values. While those differences are very clearly there, they are highlighted by the fact that the two women are speaking different languages to Jane. Alba's dialogue is traditional and spoken entirely in Spanish, while Xiomara's advice is perhaps more understanding of the way young people interact, and is said in English. It is in this way that Spanish on the show is used as the language to instill wisdom and tradition, while the English dialogue provides a more modern and youthful perspective.

Despite the fact that the Villanueva women mostly communicate in English, I would like to emphasize the instance in which Jane and Xiomara speak Spanish to each other. The scenario is the threat of Alba's deportation at the hospital in "Chapter 10," which I have described in detail

earlier in this chapter. Xiomara and Jane desperately try to figure out what to do about Alba's serious injury, relying on Michael and Rogelio for support as they wait out the storm. It is then that Michael puts Jane in touch with Xiomara via radio, and they are able to discuss the delicate situation that Alba is in. However, Xiomara does not trust the police officer that lent her his radio, so she addresses him in Spanish, asking a simple question to test his fluency in Spanish. She takes the man's confusion as a cue to discuss her family matters in Spanish over the radio in order to have some privacy. Neither Xiomara nor Jane are often seen speaking Spanish, so it is particularly peculiar to see them doing so in this scene. Despite being fully fluent in English, the women use their Spanish language fluency to discuss sensitive matters in front of the English-speaking police officer, using a privilege that not all bicultural individuals have.

In this manner, Xiomara and Jane demonstrate an instance when it is helpful to know another language despite their normally being more comfortable speaking English to each other. This may be partly in homage to their injured family member, who would have wanted them to retain their roots, but also a nod at bilingual viewers who may also find it useful to speak another language. The scene does not alienate non-Spanish speakers, however, as it is subtitled in English, and later the conversation is summarized for Michael who does not speak Spanish and could not follow the conversation. This scene provides important commentary on tolerance and patience, seeing that many monolingual English speakers in the U.S. cannot stand to hear another language be spoken or have little patience and respect for bilingual individuals. Although it may be subtle, the social commentary that the show creates in this scene helps to change misconceptions about Spanish-speaking individuals.

Despite the Villanueva women's differences, it is important to note that they all bond over and consume media in Spanish. Citing the work of Martín-Barbero and Muñoz (1992), Vicki

Mayer explains in her study of the effect of telenovelas on U.S. Latina/os that "emotionally, both women and men use gendered discourses to identify with characters in telenovelas and to discuss personal problems" (2003, p. 481). She also notes that Latina/o viewers that belong to different generations enjoy watching telenovelas because they are able to relate the stories to their lives and may feel more connected to their Latina/o roots. Even in the pilot, the three women can be seen enjoying their favorite telenovela, *The Passions of Santos*, in Spanish, which is subtitled in English in the same way other Spanish dialogue on the show is. Jane admits that she loves the telenovela, and that it was her mother and her abuela who "got her hooked on these things." She also makes a comment about how watching these romantic telenovelas have "ruined romance" for her. Furthermore, the first time that we see Rogelio interact with Jane, he is a hallucination speaking Spanish to her at the obstetrician-gynecologist's office—he is merely a character from her favorite telenovela at that point. However, when Jane meets him in "Chapter 3" (without yet knowing that he is her father), Rogelio speaks heavily accented English and only speaks Spanish in the rest of the series when he is acting on set.

The fact that the women enjoy telenovelas says a lot about their culture and their preferences. First, it hints at the influence of telenovelas on their beliefs, as the telenovelas promote values such as courage and loyalty, and create definite (and sometimes exaggerated) expectations about romance. Watching *The Passions of Santos* makes Jane think that love is about big romantic gestures and sunset proposals, giving an otherwise realistic individual the license to daydream about love. Second, it proves that regardless of the women's personal attachment to their Latina roots, they can all enjoy telenovelas in Spanish. This is both a reflection of actual media consumption, as telenovelas are among the most popular types of shows in the Spanish-speaking world, and another nod at bilingual viewers. As a result of her study of Latina girls who regularly

watch telenovelas, Mayer concludes that "telenovelas mediate meanings that people identify with as part of a larger set of values and knowledges embedded in both the nation and Latin American popular culture" (p. 481). The likelihood that a member of a U.S. Latina/o family watches a telenovela regularly is very high, regardless of age group. A study by Diana Rios entitled "U.S. Latino Audiences of 'Telenovelas'" found that Latina/os of different generations enjoy watching telenovelas for different reasons. "Depending on their needs or social place, Latinos may see melodramatic serials as tools to aid them in maintaining aspects of Latino culture (culture maintenance) and learning more about or keeping in touch with the dominant European American culture (assimilation)," she concludes (2003, p. 64). This helps Latina/o viewers relate to Jane, and non-Latina/o viewers to become exposed to the Latina/o custom of sitting around the television to watch telenovelas with family.

It is possible that Rogelio speaking only Spanish in the pilot proved to be too much Spanish for a U.S. show, which is why later in the series he speaks accented English. Rogelio's heavy accent provides a middle ground between being fluent in English and being fluent in Spanish, and may call attention to a linguistic situation that many U.S. Latina/os may find themselves in as well. That said, the show demonstrates a delicate balance between English and Spanish that celebrates Latinidad without making the show *only* about Latinidad. Although it is not always pleasant to read subtitles when a character is speaking in a foreign language, viewers do not seem to mind the amount of reading that the show calls for. *Jane the Virgin*'s usage of Spanish dialogue is used wisely and poignantly, proving that a show about Latina/os does not have to be only for Latina/os.

CONCLUSION

The portrayal of Latina/os on *Jane the Virgin* is so varied and complex that it provides one of the most accurate and authentic perspectives on Latina/os that I have seen on television. The

fact that the Villanueva women have different levels of attachment to religion, tradition, their Latina/o roots, and the Spanish language provides a refreshing amount of diversity that breaks down Hollywood stereotypes about what it means to be Latina/o. Alba is a devout Christian who is fearful of authorities and speaks mostly Spanish; Xiomara only prays out of desperation, speaks English, and lives a carefree life; Jane questions religion but has faith, uses Spanish only in emergencies, and looks to both her abuela and her mother for moral guidance. The Villanueva women's beliefs and values all depend on their past experiences and their knowledge of the Spanish language and Venezuelan culture. Jane, being a product of a bicultural, bilingual family represents a range of beliefs, both old and new, that can ring true for many viewers.

The differences among the women are based on not only their age group and level of connection to their Venezuelan roots, but also their opportunities to improve their lifestyle. For example, Jane has the most opportunities to improve her life: she searches for job opportunities, enters writing competitions, and even decides to attend graduate school. Xiomara has had fewer opportunities based on her educational background, though she still makes an effort to improve her life in following her dreams of becoming a singer. Alba has had the fewest opportunities of all, as her legal status and lack of knowledge of the English language hinder her from doing things she may want to do. However different the women's lives are, they stick together and help each other through tough situations, proving one Latina/o stereotype to be true: Latina/o families are close knit. *Jane the Virgin* writer Jennie Snyder Urman cites *Gilmore Girls* as one of her main inspirations for the show, as she was fascinated by the "mother-daughter-grandmother dynamic" that encompasses shifts in generations and culture.[12] Clearly, making the Villanueva women so

[12] From an interview with ThinkProgress in 2014. I will go more in depth on this topic in the following chapter.

different yet so close was important to the writer in order to depict a multidimensional, modern family.

Additionally, as the U.S. Latina/o population continues to grow, more television producers are attempting to tap into the preferences of Latina/o audiences. In order to address the rapid increase in Latina/o population in the United States, says Emily Steel of *The New York Times*, producers are looking for ways to "reach Hispanic audiences with culturally relevant messages, both on Spanish- and English-language programming." One of the best ways to cater to bicultural, bilingual youth is to create media that is as bicultural and bilingual as they are, as *Jane the Virgin* (and several channels, such as Mun2, NuvoTV, and MTVtr3s) has attempted to do. Steel claims that it is the perfect time in television history to create shows that "appeal to groups that are more tightly defined but also more dedicated," seeing that digital networks and streaming sites have created the perfect climate of narrowcasting.[13] While this is true, in her article "Late Invites to the Party," television scholar Mary Beltrán warns readers that perhaps the change is not happening quickly enough. She describes the change in Latina/o representation on television as going "from invisibility to slight visibility," meaning that there is still work to be done before we see multiple shows with Latina/o leads, or Latina/o writers. However, she continues, a larger quantity of shows demonstrating the skills of Latina/os is not enough. The quality and diversity of Latina/o representation on Hollywood shows is crucial for the reversal of decades of stereotyping Latina/os. With this in mind, it is refreshing to see *Jane the Virgin* include diversity among its Latina/o characters and begin to restructure Latinidad in Hollywood.

[13] Narrowcasting is defined by Marcel Danesi in the "Dictionary of Media and Communications" (2009) as "broadcasting directly at a limited target audience. In broadcasting theory, most audiences are divisible into segments defined by specific demographic and lifestyle characteristics."

Chapter 3: Jane, the Virgin—Gender Roles and Sexuality among the Villanueva women

As both women and ethnic minorities, Latinas face particularly difficult issues of misrepresentation. Stereotypical gender roles have been propagated on television since the beginning of televised shows, often to the disadvantage of women, including Latinas. Shows like *I Love Lucy* and *Leave It to Beaver* depict women solely as the homemaker and/or mother, the most socially accepted roles for women. The 1980s and 1990s brought working mothers to television, such as the title character in *Julia,* Clair Huxtable in *The Cosby Show,* and Maggie Seaver in *Growing Pains*. Aside from television's inclusion of mothers in a few different professions, breaking out of normalized gender roles in media has proved to be a very slow process—one that seems to be even slower for women of color. As I mentioned in my previous chapters, Latina stereotypes are still very evident on screen, as Latina/o culture is often misrepresented for comedic effect. For example, Gloria on *Modern Family* is portrayed as a stereotypical gold digger and trophy wife, and in *Cristela*, part of the plot is that Felix earns money for the entire family. In *Jane the Virgin,* however, Jane is not stereotypically loud or overly sexualized like her counterparts on other shows. Instead Jane is presented as a traditionally family-oriented, confident young woman with ambitious professional goals and financial independence, creating a more multidimensional and relatable Latina character. However, although she is empowered in her strength and independence, the show illustrates the conflict between tradition and feminist progress through the eyes of the three Villanueva women.[14]

Aside from gender stereotypes, issues of sexuality and unplanned pregnancy are depicted on television, with a larger variety of perspectives presented in recent years on such sensitive

[14] By "feminist progress" I mean the kind of progress that helps to advance the position of women in a male dominated world with the intent of establishing gender equality.

topics. In the past, television shows would bring up these issues in a way that was general and detached, often resolving the plot with a convenient miscarriage or an adoption that would cause the mother's life to remain the same as before.[15] However, more recent shows like *Degrassi: The Next Generation* (2001) *The Secret Life of the American Teenager* (2008), *Glee* (2009), and *Raising Hope* (2010), have explored unplanned pregnancy with more nuance as they introduced conversations about abortion and custody. Often the characters in newer shows are presented with options such as to have sex or not, or to use birth control, and the shows highlight their decisions and motives. While older shows had a tendency to shame both teen and adult characters for being sexual and irresponsible, newer shows seem to accept sexuality as a human trait.

The hit WB show *Gilmore Girls,* for example, demonstrates the kinds of decisions that Lorelai had to make as a young mother and how those decisions affected her and the lives of those around her. However, the show is not just about Lorelai having had Rory at 16, but rather about the daughter-mother-grandmother relationship and the family politics involved in the unplanned pregnancy. In a 2014 interview with Think Progress, *Jane the Virgin* writer Jennie Snyder Urman explains that it is that matriarchal relationship that inspired the family dynamics of the Villanueva women. "As I started to think about Jane, and how her mom would have had her young and unmarried, and that's the reason she's making her choices, it's impossible not to think about *Gilmore Girls"* she reveals, "because that was the central premise [of the show]." Evidently, neither *Jane the Virgin* nor *Gilmore Girls* (for which Urman also wrote) shames young women for their sexuality, instead depicting the often-opposing perspectives of each generation of women in the family. The difference in beliefs is undeniably related to the

[15] As explained in more detail on TvTropes.org, published by an admin named Tom (redshift).

upbringing and past experiences of each woman as these shape their outlook on sexuality and womanhood.

This chapter will assess the way that the Villanueva women in *Jane the Virgin* present their differing opinions on topics concerning gender and sexuality. As part of my examination of this subject, I will analyze themes and scenes that appear in six episodes in seasons 1 and 2 that represent the perspectives of the Villanueva women on topics such as gender roles, sexuality, virginity, and unwanted pregnancy. To frame my analysis of perspectives on virginity and sexuality in *Jane the Virgin,* I use Gloria González López's study of what she calls the "pleasure-danger spectrum" in her book *Erotic Journeys: Mexican Immigrants and their Sex Lives*. In an attempt to understand Latina women's diverse perspectives on sexuality, she surveys Mexican women on their opinions on virginity and learns that:

> A woman may question the various dynamics controlling her sexuality and may come to reclaim it so that she can experience it freely…a woman may take a risk in claiming and experiencing sexuality while encountering dangerous situations and experiencing painful repercussions (such as the risk of getting pregnant and feelings of guilt or shame) … a woman faces the risk of being sexually coerced or victimized and of involuntarily losing her virginity due to sexual violence (p. 51).

This spectrum of perspectives on sex is a prime example of how Latinas' and all individuals' personal opinions are often based on societal, cultural, and even intellectual beliefs. My focus in this chapter is on the way that *Jane the Virgin* partially transcends stereotypical views on Latinas and the way that they are expected to act in order to be accepted and respected

by society. I claim that the Villanueva women possess different perspectives on issues of gender and sexuality based on their individual personalities and personal experiences, providing insightful commentary on gender stereotypes and diverse female sexuality among Latina/os.

GENDER ROLES

The way that women are depicted on *Jane the Virgin* varies from situation to situation, sometimes perpetuating stereotypes about how they act, and other times reflecting a more multidimensional depiction and feminist perspective. For this reason, sometimes it is difficult to determine with certainty which message the show is attempting to convey about women and their place in society. Presumably, Alba and even Xiomara's perspectives on women should be more traditional than Jane's because of their generational gap. However, even Jane can be seen falling into stereotypical female roles while struggling to balance her home life and her academic life. I have selected three situations from the narrative when the Villanueva women either affirm or reject traditional gender roles to analyze; I will assess the motivation for their choice.

My first case study is when Xo is preparing to meet a record producer in "Chapter 9" and she imagines a poster of Paulina Rubio talking to her and giving her advice so that she can succeed at her meeting. As Xiomara's idol and role model, the famous Mexican singer and actress holds authority even in Xiomara's imagination. "You're not a stripper," imaginary Rubio reminds her in "slut-shaming" fashion as she disapproves of Xiomara's shoe selection, while also suggesting that she wear a brighter lip color to play up her sex appeal. Later the image of her idol on a billboard conveys a similar message as she advises Xo to "walk tall," instilling a sense of class and professionalism. Perhaps the most moving point of this story line is when Xiomara returns from the meeting and it is revealed that the producer rejected her, claiming that she is too old to be a pop star. Unfortunately, Xo takes the criticism to heart, as she begins to reevaluate her

lifelong dream of becoming a famous singer and decides to let it go in spite of her mother and Rogelio advising her to continue and supporting her dream. It is not until Paulina Rubio herself encourages to continue fighting for her shot at stardom that Xiomara stops feeling sorry for herself and decides not to give up on her dream.

Another situation in which a Villanueva woman faces a conflict about the type of woman she wants to be and the type of woman she is expected to be is found in "Chapter 28," when Jane no longer has time to attend her "mommy and me" class with Mateo. As context for this moment, I should explain that in "Chapter 18," before Mateo was born, Jane was faced with a stereotypical single mom scenario. While the other mothers in the class had brought their partners to help them do the exercises, Jane had to use a wall for support because Rafael missed the class. However, things change after Mateo is born and Jane decides to attend graduate school. When she starts skipping "mommy and me" classes because of her duties as a student, Rafael steps in without hesitation and becomes the only dad in the class. While everyone else in class accepts him and his commitment to embracing his duties as a parent, Jane quickly becomes concerned that she is not thinking of her son enough. Instead of being there when he reaches certain milestones, Jane is preoccupied with writing her thesis, and she continues to worry that she is not being a good parent. Here Jane struggles to balance her family life and her academic goals, but luckily, she realizes she has Rafael to co-parent with.

Jane's struggle for balance in her life is particularly important because she is forced to make decisions about the type of mother she will be. Clearly, she expects herself to a be a fully involved, committed, and loving mother to Mateo, keeping her schedule flexible so that she can be available for whatever her son may need. This expectation for herself may have been imposed on her by society, but it also may be the result of her trying to correct her parents' mistakes. Now

that it is her turn to provide for a child of her own, Jane creates high expectations for herself as a mother. The problem is that her academic goals and her dream to teach are incompatible with her motherhood expectations. Being a full-time mom and a graduate student are both time-consuming endeavors, making her feel that she has to choose one over the other in order to be fully successful in the role that she pursues. The fact that Rafael misses the Lamaze class is not surprising to the viewer, as Rafael is often portrayed as the rich playboy with no parenting skills. However, as time goes by and after Mateo is born, Rafael dedicates his time to his son and his wellbeing. This includes, of course, Mateo not missing his weekly "mommy and me" class and Rafael stepping in for Jane. The fact that a father shows up to the "mommy and me" class is celebrated on the show, as Rafael's is not the face we expect to see, and can be read as a sign of progress in gender equality in parenting.

Jane has to make a similarly difficult decision as early as "Chapter 2," when Michael asks Jane to quit her job because he does not want her to be near Rafael. It is an unfair and selfish request, and Jane protests accordingly, reminding him that all of her friends work at the Marbella and she enjoys her job very much. Even still, Michael does not drop the topic.

Jane: Talked to Rafael. Everything's going to be fine.

Michael: Good, that's good. I want you to quit your job.

Jane: What?

Michael: I-it's too much. You're carrying the guy's baby. You just told me you kissed him.

Jane: Five years ago. It was nothing. Come on, baby. I've been there for four years. I really like it, I have all my friends there. It pays well. I have health care. Michael—

Michael: Babe—

Jane: I don't want to start over. You know how much I don't want to start over.

Michael: I can't help it, it makes me uncomfortable. There are a million other hotels in South Beach. Just find another one.

(Jane nods)

Here Michael is clearly upset that Jane used to have a crush on the father of the baby she is carrying and he feels threatened and insecure. In later scenes, Jane can indeed be seen filling out applications for new jobs, until after a conversation with her mother, she decides to keep her current job. She leaves Michael a voicemail, saying, "I need some constants in my life right now. I really do. Which is why I'm going to keep my job." This resolution goes against Michael's wishes, but it establishes Jane as a strong, independent woman, capable of making her own decisions based on her needs. This sort of feminist narrative is exactly what this episode needed, as the way that Michael demands that Jane quite her job is not considerate or respectful at all, and had some connection to their genders.

While some of these scenes illustrate antiquated attitudes towards women, overall the show seems to celebrate gender equality. In my previous examples, it is clear that Jane is being oppressed and belittled by men, often taking their criticism to heart and without any objection. However, Jane ultimately learns that she needs to stand up for herself and do what she feels to be right, not what she was told to do. In the case of the "mommy and me" class, Rafael represents a progressive perspective that welcomes fathers to take responsibility for their children as caretakers and not just the breadwinners. It is these current takes that make *Jane the Virgin* a refreshingly progressive show to watch in terms of gender roles.

VIRGINITY

Perhaps the most prominent topic in *Jane the Virgin* is, of course, virginity, and the expectations that each of the Villanueva women have for Jane. The most well-known scene of the show, and one that I covered in the previous chapter, comes at the very beginning of "Chapter 1" when Alba explains to a young Jane why she must remain chaste. As I have already discussed the dialogue in this scene, now I will examine the cinematic devices that were used to convey the meaning of Alba's speech. The first thing I noticed was the usage of the Spanish language to express a sense of wisdom and authority. Alba uses Spanish dialogue to warn Jane against losing her virginity, while Xiomara chastises her mother in English for the lessons she is instilling in Jane. It is especially important to note the language and tone that Alba chooses to use in order to teach Jane about virginity because her choices make her message more imposing and convincing.

Additionally, the bright turquoise hue of Jane's room and Jane's pink flower pattern dress suggest her innocence, while Alba's modest clothing in muted colors represents her piousness. At the same time, Xiomara is wearing overall shorts with no shirt, conveying a flirty and sexual vibe. Lastly, the tender classical music playing during the scene helps the reader to understand that this is a scene of importance and refinement. All of these elements work with the dialogue to create a memorable moment in which Jane learns a lesson that would dictate her future decisions. We must not forget that this powerful scene represents much larger topics: an older Latina urging her granddaughter to remain chaste while a middle-aged Latina disagrees with the teachings. Here both women have beliefs about how young Latinas should act, and specifically, how Jane should act in order to be a respectable woman (according to Alba) or a free woman (according to Xiomara). Chastity may be so important to Alba because of the cultural significance attached to a

young Latina woman's virginity that dictates that women are more honorable and respectable when they are virgins before marriage. Meanwhile, Xiomara represents a more liberal perspective that rejects Alba's beliefs and believes them to be antiquated in their degradation of women's sexuality. Xiomara's viewpoint directly parallels the findings of Gonzalez-Lopez, who concluded that, while many Latina women felt shame and guilt after their first sexual encounter, others "experienced it in a positive way," leading to no regrets (2005, p.52). The fact that when the flashback is over we see Jane stop Michael from going too far as they kiss passionately proves that Alba's lesson worked and that Jane truly believes in waiting until marriage for sex.

Eventually Jane learns to form her own opinions about sex and virginity in spite of her family's differing and confusing views. In "Chapter 3" she decides that she wants to have sex with Michael because she knows she loves him so there is no doubt in her mind that she will ultimately end up with him. With her life plans so profoundly disrupted, she decides that she and Michael have nothing else to wait for. It comes as no surprise to viewers that when she explains this decision to her family, Alba becomes upset with Jane, and Xo is supportive and helpful. However, as she lies with Michael in bed, Jane begins to see small signs for her to stop, such as flower petals (much like those from the flower she crumpled in the beginning of the show) falling, the television turning on by accident to a video of Rafael speaking in euphemisms, and the fire alarm in the hotel going off. The narrator here explains these bizarre incidents as "divine intervention," as if God was talking to her, and Jane gives up the idea of losing her virginity that night.

When Jane makes the decision to have sex with Michael, she exercises her right to develop her own opinion on sex. Although this decision contradicts the lessons she was taught as a child, Jane is shown as a responsible adult, free to make decisions about her sex life along with

her partner. It says a lot that her mother is supportive of her mature decision and her abuela is disappointed. Xiomara represents a modern, feminist outlook on sex that allows women to decide if, when, and with whom they have sex. The most important part of this perspective is that it implies that there is normal sex life and each woman will decide what is right for her without the judgment of society. On the other hand, Alba grew up in a time period and in a country in which women were encouraged to abide by gendered norms and have manners if they did not want to be shunned by society. This scene is a prime example of Gonzalez-Lopez's research at work, where the older generations believe that women should honor their families and protect themselves from potentially jealous husbands by keeping chaste until marriage, and newer generations begin to break away from traditional Latina/o sexist beliefs (p. 52). In the end, Xiomara and Alba want what is best for Jane, both believing that their point of view is correct. It is also worth noting that so many bizarre things happened to Jane when she was about to have sex with Michael. Despite the narrator calling these coincidences "divine intervention," it is even more likely that Jane projected her fears and anxieties onto those objects. At the time, Alba was so upset with Jane that she had refused to talk to her, possibly causing Jane to carry a guilty conscience. In this example, it is difficult to discern Xiomara and Alba's expectations for Jane and what Jane really wants for herself.

It is not until later in season 2 that the true reason that Alba is so adamantly opposed to sex before marriage is revealed: Alba herself had sex before marriage. In "Chapter 36" Jane accidentally finds out that her abuela had sex with a man that was not her grandfather. Alba asks that Jane keep it to herself, but Xiomara finds out anyway and becomes outraged in one of the season's most emotional scenes.

Xiomara: You lied to me? This whole time?

Alba: No era la información apropriada para compartir contigo. Especialmente porque tú no necesitabas esa motivación. / [subtitled on screen] *It wasn't information that was appropriate to share with you. Especially because you didn't need the encouragement.*

Xiomara: Oh, my God. Are you serious? You're such a hypocrite!

Alba: No. Lo que yo hice fue diferente. No es lo mismo. Lo mío fue una vez. Tú estabas acostándote con cualquier persona por ahí. / *No. What I did was different. It wasn't the same. I got carried away one time. You were sleeping around.*

Xiomara: I did not sleep around, Ma. Do not make me feel like a slut.

Alba: Eso no es lo que estoy haciendo. / *I'm not.*

Xiomara: You are. Like you always have. And I am not. I am just a normal woman who enjoys having sex. And you have made me feel like crap about it my entire life. And that's why I'm so pissed.

Figure 4. Xiomara sheds a tear as Alba tells her about the shame she felt in the past and apologizes for passing judgment.

Later, Alba apologizes to Xiomara for making her feel ashamed of having sex. She explains that the people in her town had reacted poorly to Alba having sex with Pablo at a young age and unmarried. She was too embarrassed to tell Xiomara the story when she was younger and ended up passing some of that shame on to Xiomara when she started showing interest in sex. In Figure 2 it is evident that Xiomara becomes emotional upon hearing her mother's apologetic words, feeling relief at finally being able to talk to her mother about men.

The scene I have just described adds crucial information about Alba's motivation for shaming her daughter and her granddaughter for having sex. The reason that Alba so adamantly instructs Jane to remain chaste in the beginning of the show is that she is afraid that Jane will have to endure the same public shame that she experienced in Venezuela for having sex out of wedlock. Here it is important to note that Alba's views on virginity are difficult to separate from her cultural and religious beliefs, given that she was raised in an entirely different environment than Jane, or even Xiomara. Alba had sex before marriage about 50 years ago in a Latin American town that was presumably highly religious.[16] The location and time period of the event contribute to the reaction of the townspeople, as they help us understand their traditional values. Instead of moving on from that situation, Alba carried that shame for years, eventually passing it on to her own daughter for being interested in sex when Xiomara was a teenager.

The Villanueva women on *Jane the Virgin* represent different experiences and cultural beliefs that inform their perspectives on virginity. Alba, being representing the older generation

[16] Gloria González López also found that even within Latin American culture there are differences in beliefs on women's sexuality based on region, where metropolitan areas in Latin America are more liberal and progressive than rural areas. It is possible that besides religion beliefs, the location of Alba's hometown may have influenced her personal beliefs.

and the Latina/o immigrant community, has undoubtedly the most traditional and narrow-minded views. While her belief of saving oneself for marriage is rooted in religion and her small-town Venezuelan culture, her habit of shaming women proves that she can be judgmental and unfair about other people's decisions. Having grown up in the United States with a strict mother, Xiomara has more a more casual outlook on virginity, partly because she grew up in a more relaxed environment with different opinions of premarital sex and partly to be rebellious against her mother. After promising her abuela that she would wait until marriage to have sex when she was only 9 years old, Jane keeps her word for years to honor her abuela. However, when Jane becomes accidentally artificially inseminated and she is sure that she will marry Michael, she begins forming opinions of her own regarding her virginity. Although the guilt eventually overcomes her and she does not lose her virginity as she planned, Jane embodies a clash between traditional and progressive perspectives on virginity.

SEXUALITY & UNWANTED PREGNANCY

Aside from addressing Jane's virginity extensively, *Jane the Virgin* both celebrates and discredits female sexuality in a way that could be confusing to viewers. Perhaps surprisingly, Alba is not the only judgmental Villanueva woman who shames other women for their sexual lives. As it turns out, all three of the women have biases and concerns against women based on their beliefs on women and sexuality. In the very first episode of the show, Xiomara can be seen flirting with a man on the bus, even as Jane sits next to her. Despite the fact that Xo owns her sexuality and uses it to promote her singing career by inviting the man to her next gig, Xiomara can be seen shaming her neighbor "Slutty" Crystal. As she passes judgement on her lifestyle, Xiomara makes a comment about having to kiss her ass in order to get access to Paulina Rubio's bassist, adding cruelly, "Hopefully I don't get an STD."

In the 50 seconds that it takes for the aforementioned actions and dialogue to take place, the show seems to illustrate two opinions on female sexuality. One is that it is acceptable, and even favorable, to take pride in one's sexuality and use it to boosts one's confidence by attracting someone. The other is that it is entirely possible to cross over into the realm of "slutty" by creating a reputation for oneself as a result of having sex with many people. Xiomara even goes as far as suggesting that "Slutty" Crystal would have a sexually transmitted disease based on the number of partners she has allegedly had. There is an implication that Crystal is dirty and improper while Xiomara is depicted as sexy and empowered. The judgment is not much different from the argument that Alba used as an excuse for shaming Xiomara. Alba had said that her impropriety only happened once, while Xiomara "slept around;" in a similar fashion, Xiomara separates herself from Crystal by implying that Crystal has sex with many more partners than her, potentially without protection, and with questionable individuals or in dirty locations. It is clear that the line between sexy and slutty is very thin, and it would be helpful if the show delved a little more into this topic. For example, if Xiomara wears revealing clothing, why is she not labeled slutty or classless as well?

This idea brings me to the plotline in "Chapter 9," when Xiomara discovers that Jane has written a short story about a mother and daughter that is largely based on their lives. The episode highlights the feelings of shame and guilt that women may feel when their loved ones criticize their sexual habits. In this episode, Jane can be seen explaining to Rafael that the story, entitled "Jen and Lucy," is very obviously based on her mom, and that, just like Xiomara, Lucy wears booty shorts and embarrasses her daughter by putting "the loose in Lucy." When Xiomara confronts Jane about the short story, which she found by accident when she borrowed Jane's computer, Xiomara refers to herself as "Xo the Ho," asking Jane why she did not just call her

character Lucy by that name. Jane claims that she exaggerated the details of the character for comic effect, which is not a convincing argument for Xiomara, leading her to question herself as a mother. “Do you wish that I was somebody else? The kind of mom that wears bulky Christmas sweaters and bakes a lot?” Here Jane finally admits that while she would never ask her mother to change, she did feel embarrassed by her when she was younger because of the amount of men Xiomara dated.

The “Jen and Lucy” plotline may be the first time that Xiomara feels judged by Jane and realizes that her sexual behavior when Jane was younger affected her daughter’s perception of her. Although Xiomara is used to being judged by Alba, she is hurt that Jane would choose to describe her as “loose” and “easy.” This judgment goes along with my previous observation of Villanueva women shaming other women for their choice to have sex with a variety of partners. Xiomara’s hurt feelings quickly turn into guilt, however, as she realizes that the reason that Jane sees her this way is because Jane was aware, even at a young age, that her mother was dating numerous men. This scene makes us question how Latinidad and culture may influence the type of mom that Xiomara is to Jane, as Xiomara considers her role as a mother and a Latina who enjoys sex.

Jane the Virgin navigated around the idea of Jane losing her virginity by having her be accidentally artificially inseminated during a routine pap smear. In spite of skipping that event, Jane and her family must weigh their options and learn to manage an unwanted pregnancy. The life changing accident occurs in “Chapter 1,” causing Jane to hyperventilate in the gynecologist’s office as soft guitar music starts. In that moment, Jane hallucinates an image of Rogelio telling her to breathe in and out in Spanish. She later employs the same breathing technique when Rafael introduces himself as the father of the child she is carrying.

The series thus begins with a big shock for Jane and her family, especially considering that she had made the promise all those years ago to wait until marriage to have sex. Jane understands that although the insemination was an accident, she now has to deal with the consequences of the doctor's mistake. The event weighs her down even more as she spent so much time planning out her life and has milestones for her and Michael to meet before they consider marriage, let alone children. The fact that Jane drowns out the doctor's words and runs out of her office is evidence that Jane is overwhelmed with emotion as she tries to understand her new responsibility as a mother. The fact that she imagines a fictional character from her favorite telenovela trying to comfort her suggests that Jane at that moment is having trouble differentiating reality from fantasy, and may even think that the news of her pregnancy is not real. It is very evident that Jane is not ready to be a mother, as she had goals to accomplish before she arrived at that stage in her life, and she a justifiable amount of trouble accepting the news.

Aside from Jane's reaction to being pregnant, we must also consider the reactions and opinions of the other two Villanueva women regarding the shocking news. As we know, Xiomara and Alba do not always agree, as they have values and personal beliefs that do not match. In "Chapter 1" both women weigh in on the situation based on their personal experience, trying to support Jane and give her advice.

Xiomara: Let's talk, Janie.

Jane: Mom, I'm not in the mood, all right? I got a big test coming up, I just want to study.

Xiomara: But, baby, I know how you feel. I was 16 when I got pregnant with you and I was so scared.

Jane: You were irresponsible. You got pregnant because you were irresponsible. I don't even have a dad. And I've done everything right—my whole life, I've tried to do everything right so that I'd…

Xiomara: So you won't turn out like me.

Jane: I told you I didn't want to talk.

Xiomara: (puts abortive pills on Jane's dresser) I got the prescription, in case. You don't have to have a baby.

Jane: Would you have had me? Huh? If grandma hadn't made you?

Xiomara: I'm glad I had you.

Jane: That's not what I asked.

Xiomara: Yeah, I know.

Later, Alba and Jane have an intimate conversation.

Alba: Tienes que escuchar esto. / [subtitled on screen] *You have to hear this*.

Jane: No, but I know how you feel…

Alba: No, no sabes esto. Cuando tu madre vino a casa a los 16 años y me dijo que estaba embarazada, yo le pedí que abortara. / *No, you don't know this. When your mother came home at 16 and told me she was pregnant, I told her to have an abortion*.

Jane: What?!

Alba: Y elle dijo que no, gracias a Dios. Pero cargo esa vergüenza en mi corazón cada día. Porque ahora tú eres la parte más importante de mi vida, y esto va a ser la parte más importante

de tu vida también. / *And she said no, thank God. But I carry that shame in my heart every day. Because you have come the best part of my life and this will be the best part of your life too.*

In these selected scenes the Villanueva women discuss Jane's pregnancy according to their past experiences. Xiomara finds that she can relate to Jane because she too became pregnant by accident and needed guidance and support. In attempting to provide these for Jane, she realizes that Jane spent her life trying not to follow her mother's example. Jane is annoyed that, although, she did everything in her power not to become a young single mom, she will have to play that role anyway. Jane then believes that Xiomara wanted to abort her and Alba urged her to keep the baby. Instead Jane finds out that it was Alba that suggested abortion and Xiomara that ultimately decided to keep the baby. Alba most likely did not want Xiomara to keep a baby that was born out of wedlock while Xiomara felt that she had to take responsibility for her actions. However, when Jane becomes accidentally artificially inseminated, their views flip. Alba shows compassion for the unborn life and Xiomara understands that a baby will drastically change Jane's planned out life, giving her the option to abort if she wishes.

The first few episodes of season 1 are difficult for the Villanueva family as they try to deal with the news of Jane's pregnancy and decide what the best course of action is. Once Michael is invited into the family meetings, the conversation becomes more complicated as each voice has a reason to suggest keeping the baby, aborting it, or putting it up for adoption, not to mention they each have an opinion as to whether the father should be involved in raising the child. With so many decisions to make, it is no wonder that Jane ran out of the gynecologist's office and needs to take deep breaths in order to fully grasp her reality.

CONCLUSION

As illustrated in this chapter, the attitudes and beliefs of the Villanueva women can largely be attributed to the way that they were raised, and even partly to their Latina/o background. Latinidad and perceptions of the value of women are closely linked, and may vary by age group or time spent living in the United States. For the most part, the Villanueva women have clear traditional or progressive beliefs that define their actions; however, there are times when it is unclear if a character is celebrating or denouncing female sexuality, or advocating for or opposing abortion. *Jane the Virgin* touches on delicate subjects concerning gender roles and sexuality in a way that provides multiple perspectives on each topic. The variety of opinions may force the viewer to form their own using the information given. This narrative technique is great in that it does not have an obvious agenda, nor is it preaching certain values. Instead it represents women, and specifically Latinas, in different stages in their lives with different cultural identities, providing a well-rounded narrative about gender norms and expectations related to them that audiences of different demographics can relate to.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

"The exciting thing for me as an actor was patiently waiting for a role that would change the perception of Latinos in media, because of the way I felt when I was a kid. They made *Ugly Betty* and that was really exciting—America Ferrera, that was very exciting. It's all really like therapy to me and my teenage self, I realized. Because it was so painful I think, and it took me such a long journey to accept who I was, my culture, my dual identity, my body."

—Gina Rodriguez, SXSW 2017

In doing the research for this report I have learned that a U.S. Latina/o immigrant's actions or beliefs can hardly ever be attributed solely to their gender or their ethnic background; instead those actions and beliefs are a result of a variety of factors. Where the person lives and where they used to live, whether they are new to the U.S. or have assimilated into American culture, whether they are religious, whether they have the opportunity to live comfortably and pursue an education or a career. There are many factors that tend to overlap in my study of the differences among the Villanueva women in terms of personal beliefs and traditions, leading me to conclude that intersectionality plays a major role in the depiction of the Villanuevas in *Jane the Virgin*.

Alba, as a first-generation Latina immigrant, spent a portion of her life in fear of deportation and in shame after having had sex before marriage. Despite having lived in the United States for many years, Alba chooses to speak Spanish to her family and honor traditions and religious beliefs in an attempt to retain her Latina identity in a foreign country. She can be stubborn and tough with her daughter and granddaughter but she acts according to what she thinks is best for everyone while honoring her home country's values. Xiomara is often

portrayed as rebellious and impulsive, especially in comparison to her mother. Having been born in the U.S., Xiomara represents a generation of Latinas that has adopted American beliefs and values while questioning the traditional values that are part of her heritage. While she would rather speak English than Spanish with her mother, she has the ability to speak both languages fluently and is aware of her family's and her culture's traditions, though she does not always agree with them. Meanwhile, Jane can be defined as American, based on her lifestyle and the amount of opportunities she has to pursue higher education and her dream career. Even still, Jane does not neglect her Venezuelan heritage, speaking Spanish when necessary and attempting to preserve some of her family's and her culture's traditions (such as waiting until marriage to have sex, or attending church every Sunday). These differences among the Villanueva women serve to emphasize the complexity of a label like Latina/o, as each generation represents a different iteration of the term.

It is important to note that the topics I study are major issues to both Latino/as and non-Latino/as, and that Urman and her staff of writers deliberately chose to bring them up with full knowledge that the 2016 presidential candidates would address—or ignore—some of those topics. Although the CW's primary demographic is viewers ages 18-39, *Jane the Virgin* is aimed at both millennials and older audiences, who may be inclined to vote after seeing concepts like immigration come to life in the shape of an engaging and appealing narrative. The writers took advantage of their audience reach to create political commentary for their viewers to consider and ultimately use to develop their own ideas on important issues.

Jane the Virgin is unique in that it demonstrates elements of Latina/o culture and feminism through the different (and often contrary) perspectives of the Villanueva women on important topics like religion or gender roles. The multiple layers of representation in the show

make the series relatable for both Latina/o and non-Latina/o audiences, as well as for audiences of all ages and levels of acculturation. Although shows that starred Latina/os in the past often alienated non-Latina/o viewers through Spanish dialogue or culture-specific scenarios, *Jane the Virgin* presents more universal scenarios through a variety of lenses that allow for cultural diversity and conversations about gender. Through diverse representation in the writers' room, the plotlines in *Jane the Virgin* are likely more authentic and relatable than before, even to audiences that may not be Latina/o or female. Director Jennie Snyder Urman caters to the intersectionality of the young professional Latina woman, and the types of obstacles that she may face as an unmarried mother and graduate student with big hopes for the future. The themes and situations portrayed in *Jane the Virgin* have never been presented so faithfully to mixed audiences.

Additionally, the bilingualism of *Jane the Virgin* is significant in terms of presenting a more authentic representation of Latino families in the U.S., in a way that we rarely have seen presented on television. Alba unapologetically expresses herself best in her native language in an attempt to preserve her Venezuelan culture and nationality, while Jane and Xiomara, as U.S.-born Latinas, have learned to navigate the two languages with ease.

Urman helped create the U.S. version of *Juana la Virgen,* explaining that the fun part of remaking an existing telenovela is that she is free to play with the genre's tropes and to alter them however she pleases. For example, as is customary in telenovelas, she included a narrator to provide the audience with necessary information in between scenes or to recapitulate past events at the beginning of an episode. "I think the narrator gives us allowance to understand where the comedy is coming and where the drama is coming," explains Urman about the importance of the narrator's voice for a ThinkProgress online interview. "It helps guide the

audience experience of the show" when the show quickly travels between comedy and drama, and a transition is needed (Goldstein, 2014). However, despite telenovela conventions, Urman's narrator is biased in his commentary, as he seems to sway the audience's opinion on certain characters, and his voice seems to have more personality than other telenovela narrators, considering his often sarcastic or playful tone while providing information. Urman's narrator helps the audience create opinions about specific characters or situations and ultimately choose sides, while also maintaining a casual tone that audiences can relate to, as if they were gossiping with a friend.

Besides the usage of the narrator to advance the plot and influence the audience, Urman plays with other known elements of the telenovela, such as shocking plot twists and interrelated character stories. At the same time, she adds her own elements, like narrative on-screen text to clarify parts of the plot when the narrator's presence would be too intrusive and jarring, and the mimicking of text messaging bubbles that provide the audience with a familiar way of reading texted conversations in real time. The combination of old conventions and modern elements successfully invites telenovela and non-telenovela audiences of all ages to enjoy the narrative of *Jane the Virgin.*

In this way, *Jane the Virgin* proposes a new model for Latina/o representation that should be modeled in the future. The way *Jane the Virgin* manages to present Latina/os in a diverse and authentic light is refreshing and inspiring in its complication of Latinidad. As we begin to expand on what it means to be Latina/o, we create new images of Latina/os that dismantle established and harmful stereotypes. In a SXSW panel entitled "Hacking the Script: Disrupt Diversity in Hollywood" in Austin, Texas in March 2017, Gina Rodriguez spoke about diverse images on screen along with fellow panelists Yara Shahidi (from ABC's *Black-ish*), producer Jon Spaihts,

and screenwriter Wendy Calhoun. At the end of the panel I had the opportunity to ask Rodriguez directly why she has turned down certain roles that she thinks do not advance Latina/o representation and how she determines what is good and bad representation:

> I wanted to play every other role besides the role that we've seen 7,000 times, not to mention there is nothing wrong with being a maid," she responded. "I was a maid. I've cleaned houses. I was a nanny. There is nothing wrong with working for a living. It's just that when you only see one view over and over and over again, you start to think: 'That's the only place I exist.' And that's just not true, at all. So I just want to choose roles that I know that I am contributing to a new conversation and I'm playing roles that will allow us to see Latinos in a different light.

Rodriguez wisely believes the roles that she chooses to play and the images that Hollywood chooses to perpetuate or change will ultimately affect the viewers the most. She is specifically concerned about young Latinas, who much like her when she was a girl, may still not feel represented on screen. As an actor with several prestigious awards under her belt, Rodriguez has the privilege to be able to choose which roles she wants to play, and she actively uses her voice to promote more diverse images of Latina/os. Her work on *Jane the Virgin* has drawn the attention of critics and viewers alike in its authenticity and faithfulness to real bicultural bilinguals. Following the success of bicultural shows like *Jane the Virgin*, it is possible that its bilingual writing style will be the model for ethnocentric television shows in the future. In my examination of controversial topics presented in *Jane the Virgin,* I found that the show

humanizes Latino/a immigrants and thus challenges stereotypes about that ethnic group. Furthermore, the narrative of *Jane the Virgin* provides different generational and cultural perspectives in its characterization of the Villanueva women, which helps viewers to understand multigenerational families and how their sociocultural positions affect their family dynamics.

So, what's next? We must create and support media that provides diverse and inclusive images of Latina/os and women. We must write our own stories, and encourage others that have created authentic stories. One of Rodriguez's main points during the SXSW panel I attended is that the power of the consumer is greater than we realize. "We don't understand that we have that power and I think that that's what's missing, the knowledge that we do control the content by deciding whether or not we go and watch these movies that lack representation—that lack representation of women, the representation of women of color," she said as a call to action to the audience. Perhaps her view is optimistic but we cannot afford to discount it—instead we should actively try to change the perception of Latina/os on screen, even faster and more effectively than before.

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